

MR. WILLIAM JOHNSTON, INSPECTOR OF FISHERIES (IRELAND).

Return to an Order of the Honorable The House of Commons,
dated 15 May 1886;—/95,

COPY "of CORRESPONDENCE between the Lord Lieutenant of *Ireland* and Mr. *William Johnston*, Inspector of Irish Fisheries, in the Years 1883, 1884, and 1885, relating to his Participation in the Discussion of Political Matters."

Dublin Castle, }
23 May 1885. }

R. G. C. HAMILTON.

COPY of CORRESPONDENCE between the Irish Government and
Mr. William Johnston, of Ballykilbeg

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to Mr. *Johnston*.

Sir,

Irish Office, 23 July 1883

THE attention of the Irish Government having been directed to the report of a speech delivered by you on the occasion of a public demonstration at Lambeg, on the 12th instant, I am to inform you that it is the clear opinion of the Irish Government that a gentleman holding the position of a permanent salaried official of the Crown should not have made such a speech on such an occasion.

They cannot but consider that you committed a grave indiscretion in so doing, and they feel bound to warn you of the serious consequences which will probably result from any repetition of such a proceeding on your part.

I am, &c.

William Johnston, Esq.,
Ballykilbeg.

(signed) *G. O. Trevelyan*.

Mr. Johnston to the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

Ballykilbeg, 25 July 1883.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd instant in reference to a speech made by me, at Lambeg, on the 12th.

Till I received that letter I was under the impression that Her Majesty's Government would be glad to learn that there was a loyal party in Ireland which was prepared to resist the disintegration of the Empire, even, if necessary, by force of arms.

I had in recollection the Prime Minister's speech at Leeds, in which those who should be on the side of law and order were reproached for their silence and apathy, and I could not imagine that it would be otherwise than satisfactory to Her Majesty's Government to find that a large number of loyalists would neither be silent nor apathetic in the event referred to.

I had also the honour of forwarding to you the resolutions adopted at Ballykilbeg on the 12th July 1883, in which "at a time of great peril and danger," the meeting declared its attachment to the Throne, "and its firm determination to resist every attempt to destroy the Legislative Union." At this meeting a dutiful and loyal address to Her Most Gracious Majesty was adopted, which, as chairman of the meeting, I was informed by Her Majesty's Secretary of State to the Home Department he "had the honour

to lay before the Queen," and "that Her Majesty was pleased to receive the same very graciously."

In the resolutions and the address to the Queen, which you acknowledged with thanks, the same principles were enunciated which I repeated at Lonsbeg, and I have the honour to request that you will be good enough to point out by what I have now incurred the censure of Her Majesty's Government.

It is impossible to misunderstand the warning given in your letter, and therefore I am anxious to know exactly what I am prohibited from doing in maintaining the cause of the Constitution and Crown.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

The Right Hon. G. O. Trevelyan, M.P.,
 &c. &c. &c.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Sir,

Irish Office, 31 July 1883.

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th instant, and to say that you appear to be under a misapprehension as to the grounds upon which my communication to you was based.

I offered no opinion as to the proceedings of the meeting in which you took a prominent part.

The fact that you are a public servant entrusted with important functions of a quasi-judicial character, renders it, in the opinion of the Irish Government, imperatively necessary that you should abstain from participating in public party demonstrations.

I have to remind you that you were twice cautioned on this subject by the Government which was in office in 1879,* and I trust that for the future your conduct in this respect will be regulated by the requirements of the service to which you belong.

I am, &c.
(signed) *G. O. Trevelyan.*

Wm. Johnston, Esq.,
Ballykilbeg.

QUESTION for Thursday.

MR. SEXTON to ask Chief Secretary whether Mr. William Johnston, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fisheries in Ireland, attended and spoke on the 19th October last, at a political meeting convened by the Dublin Constitutional Conservative Club, on the 3rd and 4th of October at political meetings, and at a political banquet at Belfast on the 4th December, at an Orange Soiree of "The Royal Hobbs Black Preceptory," in Dublin, at which, on the motion of the Grand Chaplain of the Orange Society, a motion was adopted, "That this meeting record its protest against the action of the Government in depriving Lord Rossmore of the Commission of the Peace, and regard the step so taken as a slur on the loyalists of Ireland;" on the 7th of January ultimo, at a political meeting in Gloucester-street, Dublin, and towards the end of January, at a banquet in honour of Lord Rossmore, a superseded magistrate, in the Rotundo, Dublin, and whether the speeches made by him on several of those occasions were calculated to excite ill-will and hostility between Her Majesty's subjects.

Mr. Johnston,
For Report,
13-2-84.

* (See *Hansard*, vol. CCXLV, pp. 274 and 1620).

Mr. Johnston to the Under Secretary for Ireland.

Office of Irish Fisheries, Dublin Castle,
13 February 1884.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to say, in reply to queries submitted to me, that I did not speak at a political meeting in the Rotunda on the 15th October 1883, as I left Belfast for Scotland that night to attend my niece's wedding, having received his Excellency's permission to go to Scotland.

I was present in Belfast on the occasion of Sir Stafford Northcote's visit, and made a few remarks in support of the integrity of the Empire.

I responded to the sentiment of my name at the soiree in the Rotunda, on the 4th December, at which a resolution respecting Lord Rossmore was introduced in manuscript after I had attended, and this was not in the printed programme sent to me.

I also at the request of the Rev. James White, Rector of St. Thomas's, addressed a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association in that parish on the 8th of January; I had been under the impression that the meeting was to be a private one, and did not think the proceedings would be reported; I do not, however, on this account wish to evade responsibility for my address.

A private and social entertainment was given to Lord Rossmore by the City and County Conservative Club on the 29th instant, at which I was invited to be present.

I have the honour of respectfully submitting these replies to the questions put.

Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, K.C.B.

I am, &c.
(signed) Wm. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston to the Under Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

131 Leinster-road, 13 February 1884.

I HAVE the honour to say that on reference to my diary, I find that I did not speak on either the 3rd or 4th October last, nor at all during that month in public.

Will you have the goodness to accept this correction of my letter to day.

Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, K.C.B.

I am, &c.
(signed) Wm. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston to the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

Fishery Piers Office,
13 February 1884.

I HAVE hesitated before addressing a communication to you in reference to statements affecting myself recently made, being certain that you would take care to inform yourself as to their truthfulness, without any such action on my part.

But in the London correspondence of this day's "Freeman's Journal" it is stated that "Mr. Wm. Johnston * * * has made himself most prominent in the late Orange disorders in Ulster."

I have never attended any of the meetings in Ulster, referred to, and have only been twice for a day or two at Ballykilbeg since October.

Other equally false assertions have been made, but I do not trouble you further with observations on this matter.

The Right Hon. G. O. Trevelyan, M.P.,
Chief Secretary.

I am, &c.
(signed) Wm. Johnston.

The Under Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Sir,

Dublin Castle, 18 February 1884.

I AM directed by the Lord Lieutenant to acknowledge the receipt of your two letters of the 13th instant, and to state that he regrets to find that you have neglected the warning given to you by the Chief Secretary in his letters of the 23rd and 31st July last, and have again participated in public party demonstrations, although he conveyed to you the opinion of the Irish Government that it was imperatively necessary, having regard to the quasi-judicial functions of your office, that you should abstain from doing so.

In these circumstances I am to inform you that his Excellency will find it necessary to remove you from the office you hold unless you are prepared to give an undertaking that you will refrain (while holding office under Government) from taking an active part in any public party meeting, and from discussing in public any party question.

William Johnston, Esq.,
Ballykilbeg.

I am, &c.
(signed) R. G. C. Hamilton.

I, William Johnston, Inspector of Fisheries, hereby undertake to refrain while holding office under Government from taking an active part in any public party meeting, and from discussing in public any party question.

18 February 1884.

(signed) Wm. Johnston.

QUESTION for Monday, No. 3.

Mr. Labouchere to ask Chief Secretary whether his attention has been called to the statement in the "Belfast News Letter" that Mr. William Johnston, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fisheries in Ireland, had written to the Orange Grand Master, "expressing his readiness if called upon to contest one of the divisions of Belfast at the general election," and that an uncontradicted statement has also been published announcing that Mr. Johnston has been selected as the Tory candidate for one of the divisions of Down. Is this the same official from whom a former Irish Secretary stated he had obtained a written pledge that he would abstain from politics whilst in office.

Had Mr. Johnston previously been several times cautioned by the Irish Executive for inflammatory speeches.

Is the Lord Lieutenant aware of the existence of the Treasury Minute of 12th November last wherein the First Lord, referring to those civil servants who "announce themselves publicly as candidates for seats in the House," states it to be their usage of the Department that a civil servant should resign "as soon as he issues his address to the electors, or in any other manner announces himself as a candidate," and that this regulation has now been made an Order in Council.

Has Mr. William Johnston resigned office as Fishery Inspector.

Is it the fact that although several weeks have elapsed since the announcement of his candidature, no steps have been taken by Earl Spencer to enforce the Order in Council.

And what is the explanation of the Irish Government.

The Under Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston,

SINCE I saw you you have been furnished with a copy of the Treasury Minute as to members of the permanent Public Service becoming candidates for seats in Parliament.

Will you please furnish the necessary information for a reply to this question.

24 April 1885.

(signed) R. G. C. Hamilton.

Mr. Johnston to the Under Secretary for Ireland.

Office of Irish Fisheries, Dublin Castle,

27 April 1885.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to say that I have seen the Treasury Minute of the 12th November last, and beg to state that I have not announced myself publicly as a candidate for a seat in the House of Commons, nor have I issued any address, nor, as I believe, in any way infringed the Order in Council.

Before publicly becoming a candidate I should, of course, place in the hands of His Excellency my resignation of office as Inspector of Irish Fisheries.

It is, however, desirable that certain inquiries, now announced to be held, should be carried out, and I shall not fail to observe due reticence while in the service of the Government.

I am, &c.

(signed) Wm. Johnston.

Permit me to add that I have not "been selected as the Tory candidate for one of the divisions of Down," nor shall I be so selected, I am certain, nor be such candidate.

I had omitted to notice this part of Mr. Labouchere's question.

I am, &c.

(signed) Wm. Johnston.

The Under Secretary,
Dublin Castle.

QUESTION for 28th April 1885.

Mr. Healy to ask Chief Secretary has Mr. William Johnston, Inspector of Fisheries, been called on to admit or deny that he wrote to the Orange Grand Master (Rev. R. R. Kane) "expressing his readiness, if called upon, to contest one of the divisions of Belfast at the general election."

Will the Government inquire if he is in a position to deny that he is the author of the following letter in the Belfast "Evening Telegraph":

"The 12th of July is being prepared for all over Ulster. In view of the approaching general election it will be of unusual importance.

"On that occasion I hope to take my place with my Orange brethren.

"No more loyal addresses will be presented to the Prince and Princess of Wales than the Orange ones, and I hope to be able hereafter to give emphasis to them when I am member for South Belfast."

And do such declarations by a civil servant of his intention to seek a seat in Parliament constitute a breach of the Treasury Rule of 12th November 1884 (since made an Order in Council), which requires that any civil servant who by an election address or "in any other manner announces himself as a candidate" should resign his position under the Crown.

Mr. Johnston.

(signed) R. G. C. H.

For report.

MEMORANDUM.

Office of Inspectors of Fisheries,

Dublin Castle, 28 April 1885.

A PRIVATE communication to Dr. Kane, communicated in private to the Orangemen, in the Clifton-street Orange Hall, Belfast, the purport of which was as stated in the question, was made. It was intended to be strictly private.

I admit having written the letter referred to in the "Belfast Evening Telegraph." I intended it to refer to a subsequent time, when, after I had resigned the Inspectorship of Fisheries, I should again take part in political affairs.

(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

Although Mr. Johnston did not intend any public announcement of his candidature to be made, and although the letter which he wrote was intended by him to apply to a period when he should have ceased to be a servant of the Crown, he places his resignation in the hands of the Government if they consider that the steps taken by him are in contravention of the Treasury Minute, which he had no intention of infringing.

(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

NOTE.

The above memorandum, which was written by the Under Secretary after an interview with Mr. Johnston, was signed by him, so that his view of the position might be placed authoritatively upon record.

Mr. Johnston to the Under Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

131, Leinster-road, Dublin, 1 May 1885.

I HAVE the honour to say, that it seems probable I may not be invited to become a candidate for South Belfast, for which I have not offered myself, and should not, unless the friends, who talked of proposing it, go further in that direction than they have already done.

In this case, and in the event of the selection of another candidate, instead of my being invited, I have the honour to ask permission to take my family to Ballykillybeg for six weeks, beginning the first of July, under of course the official restrictions now in force.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

Mr. Johnston to the Under Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

2 May 1885.

I HAVE the honour to inform you, for the information of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, that the idea of my being a candidate for a Parliamentary seat, at the general election, has now been abandoned, and that those persons who contemplated this, have decided to support another for South Belfast.

Under these circumstances any allusion to my possible action is hereby withdrawn, and I trust to the satisfaction of his Excellency.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, K.C.M.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Sir,

Irish Office, 4 May 1885.

THE attention of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant has been drawn to a paragraph in the "Daily Express," of the 22nd April last, purporting to contain a report of a speech made by you on the previous day at a meeting of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

Appended is a copy of the paragraph in question.

It appears to his Excellency that the general tone of that speech, emphasized as it is by pointed reference to a party anniversary on the 12th July, can hardly be reconciled with the written undertaking given by you last year to refrain, while holding office under the Government, from discussing in public any party questions.

The same observations apply to the letter in the "Belfast Evening Telegraph," the authorship of which you have admitted.

The Government cannot refrain from taking a most serious view of this matter, but before finally deciding what course it may be their duty to adopt, they wish to know whether you admit the accuracy of the appended newspaper report of your speech, and whether you have any explanation to offer.

I am, &c.

(signed) *H. Campbell-Bannerman.*

William Johnston, Esq., Ballykilbeg.

Mr. Johnston to the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Office of Irish Fisheries, Dublin Castle,

5 May 1885.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday, containing a reference to a speech of mine at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

With regard to the letter in the "Belfast Evening Telegraph," it distinctly referred to action proposed to be taken, in the event of certain possibilities which cannot now occur. Of course, I do not now intend to take the course there indicated, as that would be a distinct violation of the undertaking given by me to his Excellency.

I admit the substantial accuracy of the "Daily Express" report of my speech on the 21st of April, at the general synod.

I have the honour to submit to the Government that I have not violated in any way my undertaking given last year, as regards that speech.

Invited by the mover of a resolution in the synod to second that resolution, I did so without hesitation.

I had hoped that the day had gone by when it would be considered an offence against the Government to advocate the principles of the Articles of the Church of England, in the Church Body in which I was a representative.

It is my privilege on Sundays, occasionally, to take part in religious services, and give utterance to sentiments held in common by all Protestants. I cannot consent to abandon this, which will probably be pressed for, if a report of these observations should be published by those who are hostile to the religion of the Queen.

I have the honour most respectfully to submit these considerations to his Excellency, to whom, and to the Government, I desire to be a loyal and faithful servant.

I am, &c.

(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

The Right Hon. H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P.,
Chief Secretary for Ireland.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Sir,

Irish Office, 7 May 1885.

I AM directed by the Lord Lieutenant to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th instant on the subject of your recent speeches.

I desire to point out to you that you are under a misapprehension if you consider that these communications have been made to you because your views give offence to the Government. The Government take no exception to the opinions you may hold on religious or political questions. They are, however, bound to see that a public servant, especially when his functions are occasionally of a judicial character, does not take such a public part either in political controversy or in religious polemics as may give just and unnecessary offence to those whose affairs he is appointed to administer. This condition, which affects all members of the public service alike, was brought prominently to your notice last year in consequence of the action you had taken in certain cases, and it was expressly accepted by you in your undertaking dated 18th February 1884.

His Excellency regrets that he is unable to take any other view of your recent statements than that they are in direct breach of that condition. No fault can be found with your attending the synod of the church to which you belong, and taking part in its proceedings. But it appears to his Excellency that it was highly improper for you, in your position, to make an aggressive speech in denunciation of the beliefs of a large proportion of Irishmen; a speech so violent, indeed, as to call for expostulation and repudiation on the part of several of the clergy of your church who were present. The allusion in your speech to the well-known party anniversary of the 12th July, coupled with the expression in your letter to the "Belfast Evening Telegraph," of your intention (a conditional intention it may be) to take a personal part in the party demonstration on that day, add to the significance of such a speech.

These circumstances in the light of the previous occurrences which led to your being required to give the undertaking of February 1884, show to the Irish Government that you are unable to maintain and realise the necessity of maintaining the reserved and neutral attitude which is alone compatible with the efficient discharge of public duties such as those of your appointment.

His Excellency, therefore, directs me to inform you that he considers your continuance in office to be inconsistent with the interest of the public service, and I am to invite you to tender your resignation at your earliest convenience.

I am, &c.

Wm. Johnston, Esq.,
Ballykilbeg.

(signed) *H. Campbell-Bannerman.*

Mr. Johnston to the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

131, Leinster-road, Dublin,
9 May 1885.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, which reached me to-day, at Athlone, when engaged on official duty. I regret that his Excellency considers that my freedom of speech in the General Synod is incompatible with my being in the public service.

I must, however, take exception to the statement that my "speech was so violent as to call for expostulation and repudiation on the part of several of the clergy present."

What was repudiated was the existence of the Church of Ireland being contingent on the Church of Rome, as it was held that our Church was in being in Ireland before Popery was introduced, and would continue to exist after its downfall.

My reference to the 12th of July falling on Sunday, and the appropriateness of the day for Protestant sermons was received with loud applause, unbroken by dissent.

As

As I do not share his Excellency's view that I have violated the undertaking given in February 1884, I cannot plead guilty by resigning my Inspectorship of Fisheries.

My dismissal from the service of the Queen, is, of course, at the discretion of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.

The Right Hon.
H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P.,
Chief Secretary for Ireland.

I am, &c.
(signed) *Wm. Johnston.*

The Under Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Johnston.

Sir,

Dublin Castle, 18 May 1885.

I AM directed by the Lord Lieutenant to transmit to you the accompanying copy of a warrant, signed by his Excellency, removing you from the office of inspector under "The Salmon Fishery (Ireland) Act, 1869."

William Johnston, Esq.,
131, Leinster-road, Rathmines.

I am, &c.
(signed) *R. G. C. Hamilton.*

COPY OF WARRANT.

By the Lord Lieutenant-General and General Governor of Ireland.

(signed) *Spencer.*

WHEREAS by an Act passed in the 32nd and 33rd year of the reign of Her present Majesty, intituled, "An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Fisheries of Ireland," it is enacted that it shall be lawful for the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to appoint a fit person to act with the Inspectors of Fisheries for the time being, acting in execution of "The Salmon Fishery (Ireland) Act, 1869," and that the person so appointed should hold his office during the pleasure of the Lord Lieutenant, and that in case of the death, resignation, incapacity, or removal from office of such person, it should be lawful for the Lord Lieutenant to appoint a fit person in his place.

And whereas by warrant dated the 27th day of March 1878, of the then Lord Lieutenant, General and General Governor of Ireland, William Johnston, Esquire, was, in pursuance of the provisions of the said Act, appointed to be an Inspector for the execution of the said Act, to hold the said office by the tenure and upon the conditions in the said Act provided in that behalf.

And whereas it has seemed fit to us to remove the said William Johnston from the said office.

Now we, the Lord Lieutenant, General and General Governor of Ireland, do hereby remove the said William Johnston from the said office of Inspector under the said Act.

Given at Her Majesty's Castle of Dublin this eighteenth day of May 1885.

By his Excellency's command,
(signed) *R. G. C. Hamilton.*

MR. WILLIAM JOHNSTON,
INSPECTOR OF FISHERIES (IRELAND).

COPY of Correspondence between the Late
Lieutenant of Ireland and Mr. William Polemon,
Inspector of Irish Fisheries, in the Years 1839,
1844, and 1846, relating to his Participation in
the Discussion of Political Matters.

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Chapter 10

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